Machiavel's *Vindication of Himſelf and his Writings, againſt the Imputation of Impiety, Atheiſm, and other high Crimes; extracted from his Letter to his Friend* Zenobius.

THE Diſcourſe we had lately (dear *Zenobio*) and the preſſing Importunity of *Guilio Salviati*, that I would uſe ſome Means to wipe off the many Aſperſions caſt upon my Writings, gives you the preſent Trouble of reading this Letter, and me the Pleaſure of writing it.——

I have yielded, you ſee, to the Entreaty of *Guilio*, and the reſt of that Company, for that I eſteem it a Duty to clear that excellent Society from the Scandal of having ſo dangerous and pernicious a Perſon to be a Member of their Converſation: For by reaſon of my Age, and ſince the loſs of my Liberty, and my Sufferings under that Monſter of Luſt and Cruelty, *Alexander de Medici*, ſet over us by the Divine Vengeance for our Sins, I can be capable of no other Deſign or Enjoyment, than to delight and be delighted in the Company of ſo many choice and vertuous Perſons, who now aſſemble themſelves with all Security, under the happy and hopeful Reign of our new Prince *Coſimo*; and we may ſay that tho our Commonwealth be not reſtored, our Slavery is at an end, and that *he coming in by our own Choice*, may prove, if I have as good Skill in propheſying as I have had formerly, Anceſtor to many renowned Princes, who will govern this State in great Quietneſs, and with great Clemency; ſo that our Poſterity is like to enjoy Eaſe and Security, tho not that Greatneſs, Wealth and Glory by which our City hath for ſome Years paſt, even in the moſt factious and tumultuous Times of our Democracy, given Law to *Italy*, and bridled the Ambition of Foreign Princes. But that I may avoid the Loquacity incident to old Men, I will come to the Buſineſs. If I remember well, the Exceptions that are taken to theſe poor things I have publiſhed, are reducible to three.

Firſt, *That in all my Writings I inſinuate my great Affections to the* Democratical Government, *even ſo much as to undervalue that of* Monarchy *in reſpect of it, which laſt I do not obſcurely in many Paſſages teach, and as it were, perſwade the People to throw off.*

Next, *That in ſome Places I vent very great Impieties, ſlighting and vilifying the* Church *as Author of all the Miſgovernment in the World, and by ſuch Contempt make way for* Atheiſm *and* Profaneneſs.

And laſtly, *That in my Book of the* Prince, *I teach* Monarchs *all the execrable Villanies that can be invented, and inſtruct them how to break Faith, and to oppreſs and to enſlave their Subjects.*

I ſhall anſwer ſomething to every one of theſe; and that I may obſerve a right Method, will begin with the firſt.——

I ſhall ſpeak to that which is indeed fit to be wiped off, and which, if it were true, would not only juſtly expoſe me to the Hatred and Vengeance of God and all good Men, but even deſtroy the Deſign and Purpoſe of all my Writings; which is to treat in ſome ſort, as well as one of my ſmall Parts can hope to do, of the *Politicks*: And how can any Man pretend to write concerning Policy, who deſtroys the moſt eſſential Part of it, which is Obedience to all Governments? It will be very eaſy then for *Guilio Salviati*, or any other Member of our Society, to believe the Proteſtation I make, That *the animating of private Men*, either directly or indirectly, *to diſobey, much leſs to ſhake off any* Government, *how deſpotical ſoever, was never in my Thoughts or Writings.* Thoſe who are unwilling to believe this, may take the Pains to aſſign in any of my Books, the Paſſages they imagine to tend that way, (for I can think of none my ſelf) that ſo I may give ſuch Perſon more particular Satisfaction.

I muſt confeſs I have a Diſcourſe in one of my Books to encourage the Italian Nation, to aſſume their antient Valour, and to expel the Barbarians, meaning, as the antient Romans uſe the Word, all Strangers from among us: but that was before the Kings of *Spain* had quiet Poſſeſſion of the Kingdom of *Naples*, or the Emperor of the Dutchy of *Milan*; ſo that I could not be interpreted to mean that the People of thoſe two Dominions ſhould be ſtirred up to ſhake off their Princes becauſe they were Foreigners, ſince at that time *Ludovic Sforza* was in Poſſeſſion of the one, and King *Frederick* reſtored to the other, both Natives of *Italy*. But my Deſign was to exhort our Country-men not to ſuffer this Province to be the Scene of the Arms and Ambition of *Charles* VIII. or K. *Lewis* his Succeſſor,

ceſſor, who when they had a mind to renew the old Title of the Houſe of *Anjou* to the Kingdom of *Naples*, came with ſuch Force into *Italy*, that not only our Goods were plundered, and our Lands waſted, but even the Liberty of our Cities and Government endangered; but to unite and oppoſe them, and to keep this Province in the Hands of Princes of our own Nation, this my Intention is ſo viſible in the Chapter it ſelf, that I need but refer you to it. Yet, that I may not anſwer this Imputation barely by denying, *I ſhall aſſert in this Place what my Principles are in that which the World calls* REBELLION; which I believe to be not only *a riſing in Arms* againſt any Government we live under, but to acknowledg that Word to extend to all *Clandeſtine Conſpiracies* too, by which the Peace and Quiet of any Country may be interrupted, and by Conſequence the Lives and Eſtates of innocent Perſons endangered. REBELLION then ſo deſcribed, *I hold to be the greateſt Crime that can be committed among Men*, both againſt *Policy*, *Morality*, and *in foro Conſcientiæ*; but notwithſtanding all this, *it is an Offence which will be committed whilſt the World laſts, as often as* Princes *tyrannize*, and by enſlaving and oppreſſing their Subjects, make Magiſtracy, which was intended for the Benefit of Mankind, prove a Plague and Deſtruction to it: for let the Terror and the Guilt be never ſo great, it is impoſſible that Human Nature, which conſiſts of Paſſion as well as Vertue, can ſupport with Patience and Submiſſion the greateſt Cruelty and Injuſtice, whenever either the Weakneſs of their Princes, the Unanimity of the People, or any other favourable Accident, ſhall give them reaſonable Hopes to mend their Condition, and provide better for their own Intereſt by Inſurrection. So that Princes and States ought in the Conduct of their Affairs not only to conſider what their People are bound to ſubmit to, if they were inſpired from Heaven, or were all Moral Philoſophers; but to weigh likewiſe what is probable *de facto* to fall out in this corrupt Age of the World, and to reflect upon thoſe dangerous Tumults which have happened frequently, not only upon Oppreſſion, but even by reaſon of Malverſation, and how ſome *Monarchies* have been wholly ſubverted and changed into *Democracies* by the *Tyranny* of their Princes; as we ſee, to ſay nothing of *Rome*, the powerful Cantons of *Switzerland* brought by that means, a little before the laſt Age, to a conſiderable Commonwealth, courted and ſought to by all the Potentates in Chriſtendom. If Princes will ſeriouſly conſider this Matter, I make no queſtion but they will rule with Clemency and Moderation, and return to that excellent Maxim of the Antients, almoſt exploded in this Age, That *the Intereſt of Kings and of their People is the ſame:* Which Truth has been the whole Deſign of my Writings to convince them of.

Now having gone thus far in the Deſcription of REBELLION, *I think my ſelf obliged to tell you what I conceive not to be* Rebellion. *Whoſoever then takes Arms to maintain the Politick Conſtitution or Government of his Country in the Condition it then is*, I mean, to defend it from being changed or invaded by the Craft or Force of any Man (*although it be the* PRINCE *or chief Magiſtrate himſelf*) provided, that ſuch taking up of Arms be commanded or authorized by thoſe, who are by the Order of that Government legally entruſted with the Cuſtody of the Liberty of the People and Foundation of the Government: this I hold to be ſo far from *Rebellion*, that I believe it laudable; nay, the Duty of every Member of ſuch Commonwealth; for that he *who fights to ſupport and defend the Government he was born and lives under, cannot deſerve the odious Name of REBEL, but he who endeavours to deſtroy it.* If this be not granted, it will be in vain to frame any mix'd Government in the World: Yet ſuch is at this Day the happy Form under which almoſt all *Europe* lives, as the People of *France*, *Spain*, *Germany*, *Poland*, *Swedeland*, *Denmark*, &c. wherein the Prince hath his ſhare, and the People theirs: Which laſt, if they had no means of recovering their Right, if taken away from them, or defending them if invaded, would be in the ſame Eſtate, as if they had no Title to them, but lived under the Empire of *Turky* or *Muſcovy*: and ſince they have no other Remedy but by Arms, and that it would be of ill Conſequence to make every private Man Judg when the Rights of the People are invaded (to which they have as lawful a Claim as a Prince to his;) which would be apt to produce frequent, and ſometimes cauſeleſs Tumults, therefore it hath been the great Wiſdom of the Founders of ſuch *Monarchies*, to appoint *Guardians* to their *Liberty*, which if it be not otherwiſe expreſt, is and ought to be underſtood, to reſide in the Eſtates of the Country; which for that Reaſon (as alſo to exerciſe their Shares in the Sovereignty, as making Laws, levying Money) are to be frequently aſſembled

bled in all the Regions of *Europe* before-mentioned: These are to assert and maintain the Orders of the Government and the Laws established, and (if it cannot be done otherwise) to arm the People to defend and repel the Force that is upon them: Nay, the Government of *Arragon* goes further, and because in the Intervals of the Estates or Courts, many Accidents may intervene to the Prejudice of their Rights, or *Juros*, as they call them, they having during the Intermission appointed a Magistrate called *El Justicia*, who is by the Law and Constitution of that Kingdom, to assemble the whole People to his Banner, whenever such Rights are encroached upon; who are not only justified by the Laws, for such coming together, but are severely punishable in case of Refusal: so that there is no Question, but that if the Kings of *Arragon*, at this Day very powerful by the Addition of the Kingdom of *Naples*, and of *Sicily*, and the Union with *Castile*, should in time to come invade their Kingdom of *Arragon*, with the Forces of their new Dominions, and endeavour to take from them the Rights and Privileges they enjoy lawfully by their Constitution; there is no Question, I say, but they may (*tho their King be there in Person against them*) assemble under *Justicia*, and defend their Liberties with as much Justice as if they were invaded by the French or by the Turk. *For it were absurd to think, since the People may be legally assembled to apprehend Robbers; nay, to deliver Possession forcibly detained against the Sentence of some inferior Court, that they may and ought not to bestir themselves, to keep in being, and preserve that Government which maintains them in Possession of their Liberties and Properties, and defends their Lives too from being arbitrarily taken away.* But I know this clear Truth receives Opposition in this unreasonable and corrupt Age, when Men are more prone to flatter the Lust of Princes than formerly, and the Favourites are more impatient to bear the Impartiality of Laws than the Sons of *Brutus* were, who complained *Leges esse surdas*; that is, tho they were fine Gentlemen, in favour with the Ladies and Ministers of Kings Pleasure, yet they could not oppress, drink, whore, nor kill the Officers of Justice in the Streets, returning from their Night-Revels; but the Execution of the Laws would reach them as well as others, who in the time of *Tarquin* it seems, found the *Prince* more exorable. Nay, *the* Divines *themselves help with their Fallacies to oppugn this Doctrine by making us believe*, as I said before, *that it's God's Will all Princes should be absolute; and are so far in Conspiracy against all Mankind*, that *they assert*, that in the *Text*, *this shall be the manner of your Kings; God was giving that People the* Jus Divinum *of Government*, when in truth he was threatning them with the Plagues of *Tyrants*. But I spare the *Divines* here, since I shall have occasion in discoursing of my next Accusation, to shew how that sort of People have dealt with God's Truth, and with the Interest of Men; and to be as good as my word, I shall presently fall upon that Point, having been tedious already in the former.

I am charged then in the second place with Impiety, in vilifying the Church, *and so to make way for Atheism.* I do not deny but I have very frequently in my Writings laid the Blame upon the Church of *Rome*, not only for all the Misgovernment of Christendom, but even for the Depravation, and almost total Destruction of Christian Religion it self in this Province; but that this Discourse of mine doth or can tend to teach Men Impiety, or to make way for *Atheism*, I peremptorily deny: And although for proof of my Innocence herein, I need but refer you and all others to my Papers themselves as they are now published, where you will find all my Reasons drawn from Experience, and frequent Examples cited, which is ever my way of arguing; yet since I am put upon it, I shall in a few Lines make that matter possibly a little clearer, and shall first make Protestation, *that as I do undoubtedly hope by the Merits of* Christ, *and by Faith in him, to attain eternal Salvation, so I do firmly believe the Christian Profession to be the only true Religion now in the World. Next I am fully perswaded that all Divine Vertues, which God then designed to teach the World, are contained in the Books of the Holy Scripture, as they are now extant and received among us. From them I understand, that God created Man in Purity and Innocence, and that the first of that Species by their Frailty lost at once their Integrity and their Paradise, and entail'd Sin and Misery upon their Posterity: That Almighty God to repair this Loss, did out of his infinite Mercy, and with unparallell'd Grace and Goodness, send his only begotten Son into the World to teach us new Truths, to be a perfect Example of Vertue, Goodness and Obedience, to restore true Religion, degenerated among the Jews into Superstition, Formality and Hypocrisy, to die for the Salvation of Mankind, and in fine, to give to us the holy Spirit to regenerate our Hearts, support our Faith, and lead us into all Truth.*

Now if it ſhall appear, that as the Luſt of our firſt Parents did at that time diſappoint the good Intention of God in making a pure World, and brought in by their Diſobedience the Corruptions that are now in it; ſo that ſince likewiſe the Biſhops of *Rome* by their unſatiable Ambition and Avarice, have deſignedly, as much as in them lies, fruſtrated the merciful Purpoſe he had in the happy Reſtauration he intended the World by his Son, and in the renewing and reforming of Human Nature, and have wholly defaced and ſpoil'd Chriſtian Religion, and made it a Worldly and Heatheniſh thing, and altogether uncapable, as it is practiſed among them, either of directing the Ways of its Profeſſors to Vertue and a good Life, or of ſaving their Souls hereafter; if I ſay this do appear, I know no reaſon why I, for detecting thus much and for giving warning to the World to take heed of their Ways, ſhould be accuſed of *Impiety* or *Atheiſm*; *or why his HOLINESS ſhould be ſo inraged againſt the poor Inhabitants of the* Vallies *in* Savoy, *and againſt the* Albigenſes *for calling him* Antichriſt. But to find that this is an undoubted Truth, I mean that the Popes have corrupted Chriſtian Religion, we need but read the New Teſtament, acknowledged by themſelves to be of Infallible Truth, and there we ſhall ſee that the Faith and Religion preached by Chriſt, and ſettled afterwards by his Apoſtles, and cultivated by their ſacred Epiſtles, is ſo different a thing from the Chriſtianity that is now profeſs'd and taught at *Rome*, that we ſhould be convinced that if thoſe holy Men ſhould be ſent by God again into the World, they would take more Pains to confute this *Gallimaufry*, than ever they did to preach down the Tradition of the *Phariſees*, or the Fables and Idolatry of the Gentiles, and would in probability ſuffer a new Martyrdom in that City under the Vicar of Chriſt, for the ſame Doctrine which once animated the *Heathen Tyrants* againſt them. Nay *we have ſomething more to ſay againſt theſe SACRILEGIOUS PRETENDERS to God's Power*; for whereas all other falſe Worſhips have been ſet up by ſome Politick Legiſlators, for the Support and Preſervation of Government, this falſe, this ſpurious Religion brought in upon the Ruins of Chriſtianity by the Popes, hath deformed the face of Government in *Europe*, deſtroying all the good Principles and Morality left us by the Heathens themſelves, and introduced inſtead thereof Sordid, Cowardly, Impolitick Notions, whereby they have ſubjected Mankind, and even great Princes and States to their own Empire, and *never ſuffered any Orders or Maxims to take place where they have Power, that might make a Nation Wiſe, Honeſt, Great or Wealthy.* This I have ſet down ſo plainly in thoſe Paſſages of my Book which are complained of, that I ſhall ſay nothing at all for the Proof of it in this place, but refer you thither; and come to ſpeak a little more particularly of my firſt Aſſertion, That the Pope and his Clergy have depraved Chriſtian Religion: Upon this Subject I could infinitely wiſh, now Letters begin to revive again, that ſome learned Pen would employ it ſelf, and that ſome Perſon vers'd in the Chronology of the Church, as they call it, would deduce out of the Eccleſiaſtical Writers, the time and manner how theſe Abuſes crept in, and by what Arts and Steps this *Babel* that reaches at Heaven, was built by theſe Sons of the Earth. But this matter, as unſutable to the Brevity of a Letter, and indeed more to my ſmall Parts and Learning, I ſhall not pretend to, being one who never hitherto ſtudied or writ of Theology, further than it did naturally concern the Politicks; therefore I ſhall not deal by the New Teſtament, as I have done formerly by *Titus Livius*, that is, make Obſervations or Reflections upon it, and leave you and Mr. *Guilio* and the reſt of our Society to make their Judgment, not citing, like Preachers, the Chapter or Verſe, becauſe the reading the holy Scripture is little us'd, and indeed hardly permitted among us.

To begin at the top, I would have any reaſonable Man tell me whence this unmeaſurable Power, long claim'd, and now poſſeſs'd by the Biſhop of *Rome* is derived; Firſt, of being Chriſt's Vicar, and by that, as I may ſo ſay, pretending to a *Monopoly of the holy Spirit*, which was promiſed and given to the whole Church, that is, to the Elect or Saints, as is plain by a Clauſe in St. *Peter*'s Sermon, made the very ſame time that the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit of God were firſt given to the Apoſtles, *who ſays to the Jews and Gentiles, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt for the Remiſſion of Sins, and you ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt; for this Promiſe is to you and your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.*

Next to judg infallibly of Divine Truth, and to forgive Sins as Chriſt did, then to be the

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Head of all Eccleſiaſtical Perſons and Cauſes in the World, to be ſo far above Kings and Princes, as to judg, depoſe and deprive them, and to have an abſolute Juriſdiction over all the Affairs in Chriſtendom, *in Ordine ad Spiritualia*; yet all this the Canoniſts allow him, and he makes no Scruple to aſſume, whilſt it is plain, that in the whole *New Teſtament* there is no Deſcription made of ſuch an Officer to be at any time in the Church, except it be in the Prophecy of the Apocalypſe, or in one of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, where he ſays, *Who it is that ſhall ſit in the Temple of God, ſhewing himſelf that he is God.* Chriſt tells us, his Kingdom is not of this World, and if any will be the greateſt among his Diſciples, that he muſt be Servant to the reſt; which ſhews, that his Followers were to be great in Sanctity and Humility, and not in worldly Power.

The Apoſtle *Paul* writing to the Chriſtians of thoſe Times, almoſt in every Epiſtle commands them to be obedient to the Higher Powers or Magiſtrates ſet over them: And St. *Peter* himſelf, (from whom this extravagant Empire is pretended to be derived) in his firſt Epiſtle bids us *ſubmit our ſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be to the King, or,* &c. And this is enjoin'd, although it is plain that they who govern'd the World in thoſe Days, were both *Heathens, Tyrants* and *Uſurpers:* and in this Submiſſion, there is no Exception or Proviſo for *Eccleſiaſtical Immunity.* The Practice as well as Precepts of theſe holy Men, ſhews plainly, that they had no Intention to leave Succeſſors, who ſhould deprive *Hereditary Princes* from their Right of reigning, for differing in Religion, who without all doubt are by the appointment of the *Apoſtle* and by the Principles of Chriſtianity, to be obeyed and ſubmitted to in things wherein the Fundamental Laws of the Government give them the Power, though they were Jews or Gentiles. If I ſhould tell you by what Texts in Scripture the Popes claim the Powers before mentioned, it would ſtir up your Laughter and prove too light for ſo ſerious a Matter; yet, becauſe poſſibly you may never have heard ſo much of this Subject before, I ſhall inſtance in a few: they tell you therefore, that the Juriſdiction they pretend over the Church, and the Power of pardoning Sins comes from Chriſt, to St. *Peter*, and from him to them. *Thou art* Peter, *and upon this Rock I will build my Church; I will give thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth ſhall be bound in Heaven, and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on Earth,* &c. From theſe two *Texts*, ridiculouſly applied, comes this great Tree, which hath with its Branches overſpread the whole Earth, and killed all the good and wholeſom Plants growing upon it: The firſt *Text* will never by any Man of Senſe be underſtood to ſay more than that the *Preachings, Sufferings and Miniſtry of* Peter *was like to be a great Foundation and Pillar of the Doctrine of* Chriſt: the other *Text*, as alſo another ſpoken by our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles, Whoſe Sins ye remit they are remitted, and whoſe Sins ye retain they are retained*, are by all Primitive Fathers interpreted in this manner, *Whereſoever you ſhall effectually preach the Goſpel, you ſhall carry with you Grace and Remiſſion of Sins to them which ſhall follow your Inſtructions: But the People who ſhall not have theſe joyful Tidings communicated by you to them, ſhall remain in Darkneſs and in their Sins.* But if any will conteſt, that by ſome of theſe laſt *Texts*, that *Evangelical Excommunication*, which was afterwards brought into the *Church* by the *Apoſtles*, was here preſignified by *our great Maſter*; How unlike were thoſe *Cenſures*, to thoſe now thundred out, as he calls it, by the *Pope?* theſe were for Edification and not Deſtruction, to afflict the Fleſh for the Salvation of the Soul; that *Apoſtolical Ordinance* was pronounced for ſome notorious *Scandal* or *Apoſtacy* from the Faith, and firſt decreed by the *Church*, that is, the *whole Congregation* preſent, and then denounced by the *Paſtor*, and reached only to debar ſuch Perſon from partaking of the *Communion* of Fellowſhip of that *Church* till Repentance ſhould re-admit him, but was followed by no other Proſecution or Chaſtiſement, as is now practiſed. But ſuppoſe all theſe *Texts* had been as they would have them; How does this make for the Succeſſors of St. *Peter*, or the reſt? Or how can this prove the *Biſhops* of *Rome* to have Right to ſuch Succeſſion? But I make haſte from this Subject, and ſhall urge but one Text more, which is, *The ſpiritual Man judgeth all Men, but is himſelf judged of none:* from whence it is inferr'd by the *Canoniſts*, that firſt, the *Pope is the ſpiritual Man*; and then that *he is to be Judg of all the World*; and laſt, that *he is never to be liable to any Judgment himſelf:* whereas it is obvious to the meaneſt Underſtanding, that St. *Paul* in this Text means to diſtinguiſh between a Perſon inſpired with the Spirit of God, and one remaining in the State of Nature; which latter, he ſays,

cannot

cannot judg of those Heavenly Gifts and Graces, as he explains himself, when he says, *The Natural Man cannot discern the things of the Spirit, because they are Foolishness unto him.*

To take my leave of this matter, wholly out of the way of my Studies, I beg of you *Zerobia*, and of *Gallio*, and the rest of our Society, to read over carefully the *New Testament*, and then to see what ground there is for *Purgatory*, by which all the Wealth and Greatness hath accru'd to these Men; what colour for their *Idolatrous Worship of Saints* and their *Images*, and particularly for speaking in their *Hymns* and *Prayers* to a piece of Wood, *the Cross* I mean, *Salve Lignum*, &c. And then *fac nos dignos beneficiorum Christi*, as you may read in that Office; what colour, or rather what excuse for that horrid unchristian and barbarous Engine, called the *Inquisition*, brought in by the Command and Authority of the Pope; the Inventor of which *Peter*, a Dominican Friar, having been slain among the *Albigenses*, as he well deserv'd, is now canoniz'd for a Saint, and stil'd *San Pietro Martire*.

In the dreadful Prisons of this Inquisition, many faithful and pious Christians, to say nothing of honest moral Moors or Mahometans, are tormented and famished, or if they out-live their Sufferings, burnt publickly to Death, and that only for differing in Religion from the Pope, without having any Crime or the least Misdemeanor proved or alledged against them; and this is inflicted upon these poor Creatures, by those who profess to believe the Scripture, which tells us, that *Faith is the Gift of God*, without whose special Illumination no Man can obtain it, and therefore is not in Reason or Humanity to be punished for wanting it. And Christ himself hath so clearly decided that Point in bidding us let the *Tares and the Wheat grow together till the Harvest, that I shall never make any difficulty to call him ANTICHRIST, who shall use the least Persecution whatsoever against any differing in Matters of Faith from himself, whether the Person so dissenting, be* Heretick, Jew, Gentile *or* Mahometan.

Next I beseech you to observe in reading *that Holy Book*, though *Christian Fasts* are doubtless of Divine Right, *what Ground there is for enjoining Fish to be eaten, at least Flesh to be abstained from for one third part of the Year*, by which they put the Poor to great Hardship, who not having Purses to buy wholsome Fish, are subjected to all the Miseries and Diseases incident to a bad and unhealthful Diet; whilst the Rich, and chiefly themselves and their *Cardinals* exceed *Lucullus* in their Luxury of *Oysters*, *Turbats*, tender *Crabs* and *Carpioni*, brought some hundreds of Miles to feed their Gluttony upon these penitential Days of Abstinence from *Beef* and *Pork*. It may be it will lie in the way of those who observe this, to enquire what St. *Paul* means, when he says, that *in the latter Days some shall depart from the Faith, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats, which God hath created to be receiv'd with Thanksgiving:* but all these things, and many other Abuses brought in by these *Perverters of Christianity*, will I hope e're long be enquired into by some of the Disciples of that *bold Friar*, who the very same Year in which I prophesied, that the *Scourge* of the *Church* was not far off, began to thunder against their Indulgences, and since hath questioned many Tenets long received and imposed upon the World. I shall conclude this Discourse, after I have said a word of the *most Hellish of all the Innovations brought in by the* Popes; *which is, the CLERGY*, these are *a sort of Men* under pretence of ministring to the People in holy things, set apart and *separated from the rest of Mankind, from whom they have a very distinct and a very opposite Interest by a humane Ceremony, called by a divine Name*, viz. *ORDINATION*; *these*, whereever they are found with the whole Body of the Monks and Friars, who are called the regular Clergy, *make a Band which may be called the JANIZARIES of the Papacy*; *these have been the causes of all the Solœcisms and Immoralities in Government, and of all the Impieties and Abominations in* Religion, *and by consequence of all the Disorder, Villany and Corruption we suffer under in this detestable Age*; *these Men*, by the Bishop of *Rome*'s help, *have crept into all the Governments of Christendom, where there is any mixture of* Monarchy, *and made themselves a third Estate*, that is, have by their *Temporalities*, which are almost a third part of all the Land in *Europe*, given them by the blind Zeal, or rather Folly of the *Northern People*, who over-ran this part of the World, *stept into the Throne*, and what they cannot perform by these Secular helps, and by the dependency their Vassals have upon them, they fail not to claim and to usurp by the Power they pretend to have from God and his Vicegerent at *Rome*. They exempt themselves, their Lands and Goods, from all secular Jurisdiction, that is, from all Courts of Justice and Magistracy, and will be Judges in their own Causes, as in matters of Tythe, *&c.* and not con-

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tent with this, will appoint Courts of their own to decide Soveraignty in Teſtamentary matters and many others Cauſes, and take upon them to be the ſole Puniſhers of many great Crimes, as Witchcraft, Sorcery, Adultery and all Uncleanneſs. To ſay nothing of the fore-mentioned Judicatory of the Inquiſition; in theſe laſt Caſes, *they turn the Offenders over to be puniſhed (when they have given Sentence) by the Secular Arm*, ſo they call the Magiſtrate, *who is blindly to execute their Decrees under pain of Hell-Fire, as if Chriſtian Princes and Governours were appointed only by God to be their Bravo's or Hangmen:* they give Protection and Sanctuary to all execrable Offenders, even to Murderers themſelves, whom God commanded to be indiſpenſably puniſh'd with Death; if they come within their Churches, Cloyſters, or any other place which they will pleaſe to call *Holy Ground*; and if the ordinary Juſtice, nay, the Soveraign Power do proceed againſt ſuch Offenders, they thunder out their *Excommunication*, that is, cut off from the Body of Chriſt not the Prince only, but the whole Nation and People, ſhutting the Church-doors, and commanding divine Offices to ceaſe, and ſometimes even authorizing the People to riſe up in Arms, and conſtrain their Governors to a Submiſſion, as hapned to this poor City in the time of our Anceſtors, when for but forbidding the Servant of a poor Carmelite Friar who had vow'd Poverty, and ſhould have kept none to go arm'd, and puniſhing his Diſobedience with Impriſonment, our whole Senate with their *Gonfalonier* were conſtrained to go to *Avignon* for Abſolution, and in caſe of refuſal had been maſſacred by the People. *It would almoſt aſtoniſh a wiſe Man to imagine how theſe Folks ſhould acquire an Empire ſo deſtructive to Chriſtian Religion, and ſo pernicious to the Intereſt of Men:* but it will not ſeem ſo miraculous to them who ſhall ſeriouſly conſider, that *the Clergy hath been for more than this thouſand Years upon the Catch, and a form'd united Corporation againſt the Purity of Religion and Intereſt of Mankind*, and have not only wreſted the Holy Scriptures to their own Advantage, which they have kept from the Laity in unknown Languages, and by prohibiting the reading thereof; but made uſe likewiſe, firſt, of the blind Devotion and Ignorance of the *Goths, Vandals, Huns*, &c. and ſince of the Ambition and Avarice of Chriſtian Princes, ſtirring them up one againſt another, and ſending them upon fooliſh Errands to the *Holy Land*, to loſe their Lives, and to leave their Dominions in the mean time expoſed to themſelves and their Complices. They have beſides, kept Learning and Knowledg among themſelves, ſtifling the Light of the Goſpel, crying down moral Vertues as ſplendid Sins, defacing human Policy, deſtroying the Purity of the Chriſtian Faith and Profeſſion, and all that was Vertuous, Prudent, Regular and Orderly upon Earth: ſo that *whoever would do Good and good Men Service, get himſelf immortal Honour in this Life, and eternal Glory in the next, would reſtore the good Policy, (I had almoſt ſaid with my Author* Livy, *the Sanctity too) of the Heathens, with all their Valour and other glorious Endowments; I ſay, whoever would do this, muſt make himſelf powerful enough to extirpate this curſed and apoſtate Race out of the World.* And that you may ſee this is lawful as well as neceſſary, I ſhall ſay but one word of their *Calling* and *Original*, and then leave this Subject. The Word CLERGY *is a Term wholly unknown to the Scriptures*, otherwiſe than in this ſenſe, a *peculiar People, or God's Lot, uſed often for the whole Jewiſh Nation*, who are likewiſe called a Kingdom of Prieſts in ſome Places. In the New Teſtament, the word *Cleros* is taken for the *true Believers*, who are alſo called the Elect, and often *the Church*, which is the *Aſſembly of the Faithful met together*, as is eaſily ſeen by reading the beginning of moſt of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, where writing to the Church or Churches, he uſually explains himſelf, *To all the Saints in Chriſt*, ſometimes, *To all who have obtained like Faith with us*, ſometimes, *To all who in all places call upon the Name of the* Lord Jeſus, *&c.* by which it appears, that *neither the Word CHURCH nor CLERGY was in thoſe days ever appropriated to the* Paſtors or Elders of the Flock, but *did ſignify indifferently all the People aſſembled together*; which is likewiſe the literal Conſtruction of the word *Eccleſia*, which is *an Aſſembly or Meeting. In thoſe Congregations or Churches* was performed their *Ordination*, which properly ſignifies no more than a Decree of ſuch Aſſembly, but is particularly uſed for an *Election* of any into the Miniſtry; the manner was this: *ſometimes the* Apoſtles *themſelves in their Peregrinations, and ſometimes any other eminent Member of the Church did propoſe to the Society* (upon vacancy or other neceſſity of a Paſtor, Elder or Deacon) *ſome good holy Man to be elected, which Perſon if he had Parts or Gifts, ſuch as the Church could edify by, was choſen by the lifting up of Hands, that is, by Suffrage; and* oftentimes Hands were laid upon him, and Prayer made for him: *theſe Men ſo ſet apart did not pretend*

tied to any Consecration or Sanctuess more than they had before, much less to become a distinct thing from the rest of Mankind as if they had been metamorphosed, but did attend to perform the several Functions of their Calling, as Prophesying, that is, preaching the Gospel, visiting the Sick, *&c.* and *never intermitted the ordinary Business of their Trade* or Profession, unless their *Church* or *Congregation* was very numerous, in which case *they were maintained by Alms or Contribution*, which was laid aside by every Member, and collected the first Day of the Week by the Deacon; this was said to be given to the *Church*, and was employed by suffrage of the whole collective Body to the Poor and to other Incidencies: so far was it from Sacrilege in those Days to employ Church-Goods to Lay-Uses. *From these Words*, Church, Clergy, Ordination, Pastor, (*which last hath been translated of late Years* Bishop) *you see what Conclusions these Men have deduced, and how immense a Structure they have raised upon so little a Foundation*; *and how easily it will fall to the Ground, when* God *shall inspire* Christian Princes *and* States *to redeem his Truths and his poor enslaved Members out of their Clutches, and to bring back again into the World the true Original Christian Faith with the* Apostolical Churches, Pastors and Ordination, so consistent with Moral Vertue and Integrity, so helpful and conducing to the best and most prudent *Policy*, so fitted for Obedience to *Magistracy* and *Government*; all which the World hath for many Years been deprived of by the *execrable and innate ill Quality which is inseparable from* Priest-craft, *and the Conjuration or Spell of their new invented Ordination*, by which they cry with the Poet,

Jam furor humanum nostro de pectore sensum
Expulit, & totum spirant præcordia Phœbum.

Which makes them *so Sacred and Holy, that they have nothing of Integrity, or indeed of Humanity left in them.* I hope I shall not be thought impious any longer upon this Point, I mean for vindicating Christian Religion from the Assaults of these Men; who having the Confidence to believe, or at least profess themselves the only Instruments which God hath chosen, or can choose to teach and reform the World, though they have neither moral Vertues nor natural Parts equal to other Men, for the most part, have by this pretence prevail'd so far upon the common sort of People, and upon some too of a better Quality, that they are perswaded their Salvation or eternal Damnation depends upon believing or not believing of what they say. I would not be understood to dissuade any from honouring the *true Apostolick Teachers*, when they shall be re-established among us, or *from allowing them* (even of Right, and not of Alms or Courtesy) *such Emoluments as may enable* them *chearfully to perform the Duties of their Charge, to provide for their Children, and even to use Hospitality*, as they are commanded by St. *Paul*. But this *I will propheſy* before I conclude, that *if Princes shall perform this business by halves, and leave any root of this Clergy or Priest-craft as it now is in the Ground*; or *if that* FAMOUS REFORMER *fled some Years since out of* Picardy *to* Geneva, who is of so great Renown for Learning and Parts, and *who promises us so perfect a Reformation, shall not in his Model wholly extirpate this sort of Men*; *then I say, I must foretel that as well the* Magistrate, *as this* Workman, *will find themselves deceived in their expectation, and that the least Fibra of this Plant will over-run again the whole Vineyard of the Lord*, and turn to a diffusive Papacy in every Diocess, perhaps in every Parish: *So that God in his Mercy inspire them to cut out the Core of the Ulcer, and the Bag of this Imposture, that it may never rankle or fester any more, nor break out hereafter to diffuse new Corruption and Putrefaction through the Body of* Christ, *which is his* Holy Church, *to vitiate and infect the good Order and true Policy of* Government.

I come now to the last Branch of my Charge; which is, *That I teach Princes Villany, and how to enslave and oppress their Subjects.* If any Man will read over my Book of the *Prince* with Impartiality and ordinary Charity, he will easily perceive that it is not my Intention therein to recommend that Government, or those Men there described to the World; much less to teach Men to trample upon good Men, and all that is Sacred and Venerable upon Earth, Laws, Religion, Honesty, and what not? If I have been a little too punctual in describing these Monsters, and drawn them to the Life in all their Lineaments and Colours, I hope Mankind will know them the better, to avoid them, my *Treatise* being both a *Satyr* against them and a true *Character* of them---

Whoever in his Empire is tied to no other Rules than those of his own Will and Lust, must either be a Saint *or else a very* Devil incarnate; *or if he be neither of these, both his Life and his Reign are like to be very short: for whosoever takes upon him so execrable an Employment as to rule Men against the Laws of Nature and of Reason, must turn all topsie turvy, and never stick at any thing*; *for* if once he halt he will fall and never rise again, *&c.* And so I bid you farewell, (1 *Apr.* 1537.)

FINIS.